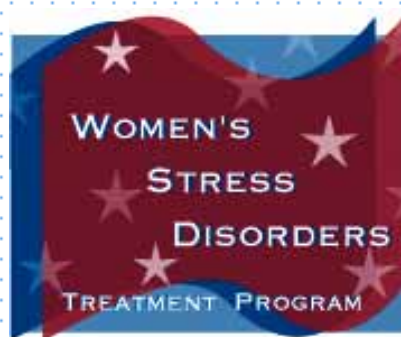


Fibromyalgia

Behavior changes
that can help

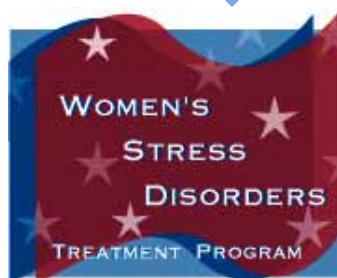


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What can I do to manage my symptoms?

- ◆ Have a healthy diet
- ◆ Reduce alcohol intake
- ◆ Quit smoking
- ◆ Engage in some physical activity and exercise
- ◆ Reduce stress
- ◆ Learn to work well with medical providers



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Where do I start?

- ◆ Your medical provider's help is only part of your treatment. You are the only one who can follow through in managing your symptoms.
- ◆ There are many suggestions that seem to help. Do what works for you. Do your own scientific experiments to sort out what actually works versus what you've always thought works.

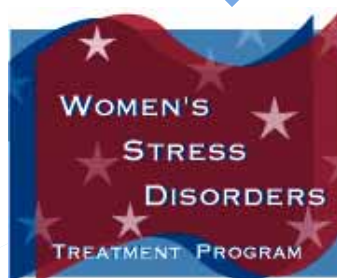


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Why exercise? It hurts.

- ◆ Regular exercise is important in everyone's life.
- ◆ For people with FM *moderate* exercise is especially important.
- ◆ Exercise raises levels of serotonin and endorphins, which helps mood.
- ◆ Aerobic fitness can improve sleep.



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How much should I do?

- ◆ Some people with FM don't exercise because they feel tired and in pain.
- ◆ It is important to begin VERY gradually (for example, for five minutes) with low- or non-impact activities such as walking, biking or water aerobics.
- ◆ GENTLE stretching before and after activity also helps.
- ◆ Check with your medical provider before beginning any exercise program.

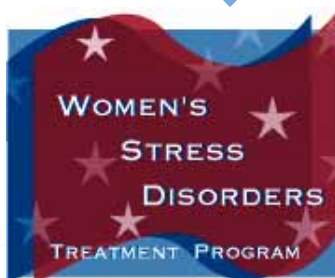


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Exercising with FM

- ◆ Even though exercise will help your pain, that doesn't mean you will feel no pain while you exercise.
- ◆ Sometimes muscle cramps or fatigue occur when you start. This is true for everyone who is "deconditioned" by having not exercised for a long time.

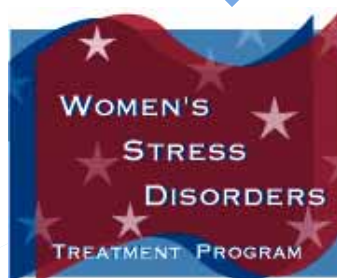


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The benefits of activity

- ◆ Stronger muscles, bones and joints
- ◆ More energy
- ◆ Better sleep
- ◆ More flexibility, less stiffness
- ◆ Helps control your weight
- ◆ Reduces depression, anxiety and stress
- ◆ Releases endorphins, the body's natural pain reliever
- ◆ Improves how you feel about yourself

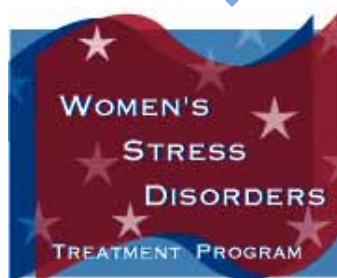


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What kind of relaxation helps?

- ◆ Again, do what works best for you. Some people find quiet music or meditative audiotapes helpful. Others may find structured relaxation exercises helpful. Still others may benefit most from quiet.
- ◆ Take a look at the “Relaxation” module for more specifics.

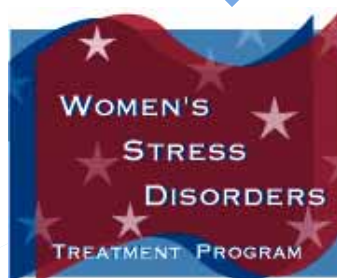


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Guided Imagery

- ◆ Some people call this Visualization.
- ◆ You imagine yourself in a pleasant situation in order to help reduce your tension or reduce your pain.
- ◆ Little research has been conducted on guided imagery for pain relief, but it may reduce anxiety and stress, which is helpful for FM.

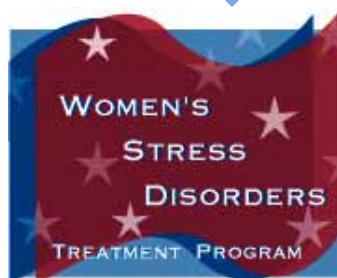


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***I've heard people talk
about meditation, too.***

- ◆ Meditation can take many forms, from prayer to Transcendental Meditation to sitting quietly.
- ◆ It looks simple from the outside but to be helpful, it requires regular practice.
- ◆ While there have been no controlled scientific studies showing meditation helps FM, it can be a relaxing experience that many with FM find helpful. Look at the “Mindfulness” modules for more on this.



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What about yoga or t'ai chi?

- ◆ Yoga is an ancient practice that focuses on both mind and body through gentle stretching poses done while focusing on breathing.
- ◆ The more strenuous types of yoga may not be appropriate for those with FM.
- ◆ Gentle movements seem to be the most helpful.

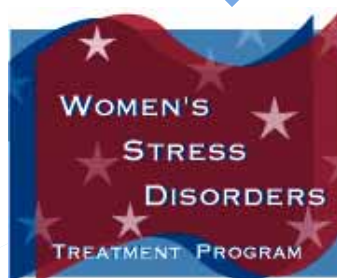


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How can learning more help?

- ◆ By learning more from reputable sources about FM, you can more effectively manage your symptoms and team up with your medical provider and loved ones to live the best life possible.
- ◆ Fibromyalgia support groups are one good way to improve your coping. Call the Arthritis Foundation (1-800-283-7800) for information about groups near you.



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What about diet?

- ◆ Grandma was right about eating your fruits and vegetables and staying away from alcohol and tobacco.
- ◆ Healthy habits ensure your body has enough vitamins and fuel to best handle your symptoms.

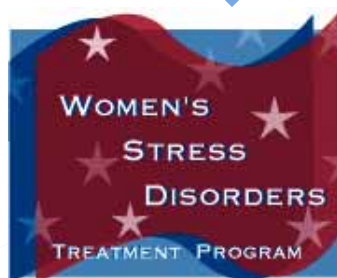


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Working as a team with your medical providers

- ◆ Come to medical appointments with your prioritized list of concerns and questions so that the most important issues get the most attention
- ◆ Let your medical providers know what steps you have taken (e.g., practicing relaxation or stress reduction) to improve your ability to cope with FM

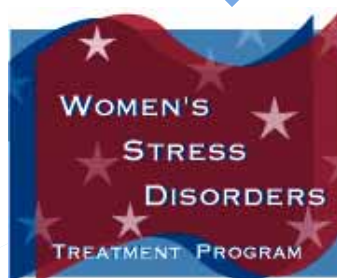


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What about medications?

- ◆ The core strategies for managing FM are those practices we already listed.
- ◆ Medications can be a useful addition to that toolbox, however.
- ◆ There is no one medication demonstrated to “fix” FM. Talk with your provider about medications that may help.



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Living well – the keys

- ◆ Look for the positive - aim for optimism
- ◆ Find meaning in the things you do
- ◆ Laugh, smile - it helps your immune system
- ◆ Learn how to solve problems rather than avoid them or blame other people or situations

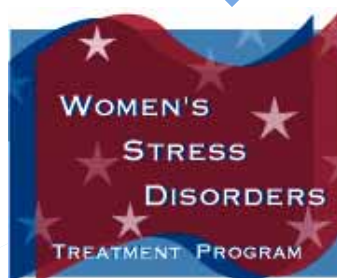


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More ways to live well

- ◆ **Involve yourself with others, make the effort to connect in satisfying relationships**
- ◆ **Treat yourself with respect and occasionally pamper yourself**
- ◆ **Spend some time helping others**
- ◆ **Balance work and play**



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